

CLAIMS

1. A network print appliance, comprising:

one or more processors;

a memory associated with the one or more processors;

5 a network interface providing full-time connection to a network and remote access to the network print appliance by one or more client computers;

a user interface module stored in the memory and executable on the one or more processors providing remote management of the network print appliance by the one or more client computers, the user interface module precluding local management of the network print appliance;

10 a printer administration module stored in the memory and executable on the one or more processors for discovering one or more printers connected to the network and creating one or more shared network print objects, each shared network print object representing a printer connected to the network as a shared network printer; and

15 a printer serving module stored in the memory and executable on the one or more processors for receiving print jobs, managing print queues, and forwarding print jobs to a shared network printer for printing.

20 2. A network print appliance as recited in claim 1, wherein creating one or more shared network print objects further comprises:

installing a printer;

configuring the printer;

assigning a printer driver to the printer;

25 monitoring the printer;

grouping the printer;
troubleshooting the printer; and
establishing a print path for the printer.

5 3. A network print appliance as recited in claim 1, wherein the printer administration module is required to create the one or more shared network print objects on the network print appliance, thereby preventing the creation of a shared network print object on any other network device.

10 4. A network print appliance as recited in claim 1, wherein the printer administration module is pre-installed on the network print appliance and supports a single operating system, the single operating system being the network print appliance operating system.

15 5. A network print appliance as recited in claim 1, wherein the network interface is a Web browser based interface.

20 6. A system for printing over a network, comprising:
 one or more client computers;
 one or more network printers;
 a network print appliance having a network interface providing full-time connection to a network and remote access to the network print appliance by the one or more client computers;
 the network print appliance being configured to discover the one or
25 more network printers and create one or more shared network print objects, each

shared network print object representing a network printer connected to the network as a shared network printer;

the one or more client computers being configured to access and manage the network print appliance through a Web browser;

5 the one or more client computers being further configured to designate a shared network print object and send a print job to the designated shared network print object while executing an application program;

the network print appliance being further configured to receive a print job, manage print queues, and forward a print job to a shared network printer
10 for printing.

7. A system as recited in claim 6, wherein creating one or more shared network print objects further comprises:

installing a network printer;
15 configuring the network printer;
assigning a printer driver to the network printer;
monitoring the network printer;
grouping the network printer;
troubleshooting the network printer; and
20 establishing a print path for the network printer.

8. A system as recited in claim 6, wherein the network print appliance is required to create the one or more shared network print objects on the network print appliance itself, thereby preventing the creation of a shared network print
25 object on any other network device.

9. A system as recited in claim 6, wherein the network print appliance comprises a printer administration module for discovering the one or more network printers and creating the one or more shared network print objects, the printer administration module being pre-installed on the network print appliance and supporting a single operating system, the single operating system being the network print appliance operating system.

10. A network print appliance as recited in claim 6, wherein the network interface is a Web browser based interface.

11. A method of printing over a network, comprising:
accessing a network print appliance from a remote computer;
through the remote computer, managing the network print appliance to discover one or more printers connected to the network and create one or more shared network print objects, each shared network print object representing a printer connected to the network as a shared network printer;
designating a shared network print object from an application program executing on the remote computer;
sending a print job from the remote computer to the designated shared network print object for printing;
receiving the print job at the network print appliance;
managing the print job at the network print appliance in one or more print queues; and

forwarding the print job from the network print appliance to a shared network printer for printing.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

5 remotely managing the network print appliance to perform:
installing a printer;
configuring the printer;
assigning a printer driver to the printer;
monitoring the printer;
10 grouping the printer;
troubleshooting the printer; and
establishing a print path for the printer.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the network print appliance is
15 required to create the one or more shared network print objects on the network print appliance itself, thereby preventing the creation of a shared network print object on any other network device.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein managing the print job at the
20 network print appliance in one or more print queues further comprises:
associating a printer option with a print queue;
holding a print job until a shared network printer is available;
holding a print job until a network administrator releases the print
job; and
25 storing a print job that cannot print.